U of T Opera Presents...

Così fan tutte

W.A. Mozart

March 13, 2025 | 7:30pm
March 14, 2025 | 7:30pm
March 15, 2025 | 7:30pm
March 16, 2025 | 2:30pm

Harbourfront Centre Theatre
231 Queens Quay West,
Toronto, ON

U of T Opera | UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO FACULTY OF MUSIC

Cosi Fan Tutte Program_Final.indd 1 2025-03-05 5:41 PM

Così fan tutte

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte

Conductor: Sandra Horst
Director: Anna Theodosakis *
Set Design: Scott Penner
Lighting Design: Siobhan Sleath
Costume Design: Andrew Nasturzio
Chorus Master: Sandra Horst
Stage Manager: Susan Monis*
Assistant Director: Mario Pacheco*
Assistant Stage Manager: Meghan Specht
Répétiteurs: Christine Bae, Helen Becqué
Surtitles: John Sharpe

SURTITLES™ invented at the Canadian Opera Company in 1983
and introduced worldwide with their production of *Elektra* by R. Strauss

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

*The participation of these Artists is arranged by permission of Canadian Actors' Equity Association under the provisions of the Dance Opera Theatre Policy.

CAST	March 13/15	March 14/16
Fiordiligi	Jordana Goddard	Camille Labonté
Dorabella	Kcenia Koutorjevski	Grace Ronan
Despina	Teresa Tucci	Aemilia Moser
Guglielmo	George Theodorakopoulos	Benjamin Wallace
Ferrando	Cameron Mazzei	Carlo Cormier
Don Alfonso	Dante Mullin-Santone	Onur Hilaloğlu

UNDERSTUDIES

Dorabella	Taline Yeremian
Despina	Chihiro Yasufuku, Katherine Kirkpatrick
Ferrando	Enquan (Frank) Yu, Christian Matta

CHORUS

Matthew Black, Joshua Gibson, Ian Gillis, Katherine Kirkpatrick, Christian Matta, Julia Renda, Chihiro Yasufuku, Taline Yeremian, Enquan (Frank) Yu

SYNOPSIS

Act I

At a café, Don Alfonso, a cynical bachelor, argues with young officers Guglielmo and Ferrando about women's faithfulness. The men insist their girlfriends, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, are loyal. Don Alfonso bets them that he can prove women are fickle, if they follow his plan. The men will pretend to leave for war, then disguise themselves to try to seduce the sisters.

At home, Fiordiligi and Dorabella are upset when they hear that the men are being sent away and Don Alfonso consoles them. Despina, the maid, suggests the sisters replace their boyfriends with new ones. Don Alfonso bribes Despina to help him introduce disguised Guglielmo and Ferrando as suitors.

The sisters are shocked to find these strangers, but Don Alfonso convinces them they are his long-lost friends. The sisters resist the men's advances, but Don Alfonso assures the men that the day is still young. In the garden, the men fake drinking poison and fall into a "coma." The sisters panic and call for Despina, who, disguised as a doctor, revives them with a giant magnet. Don Alfonso and Despina urge Dorabella and Fiordiligi to accept the suitors but the women staunchly refuse.

Act II

Despina advises the sisters on how to handle men. After the sisters consider the fact that having a little fun wouldn't do any harm, they decide on which foreigner they'll entertain. Guglielmo succeeds in replacing Dorabella's portrait of Ferrando with a heart-shaped locket, but with Fiordiligi, the matter is much more challenging. Ferrando makes a last-ditch attempt to disarm Fiordiligi and succeeds. Guglielmo, who has been eavesdropping, is furious, but Don Alfonso advises forgiveness.

Preparations for a double wedding begin, with Despina disguised as a notary. Just as the sisters are about to sign the marriage contract, they hear a military march and panic. Don Alfonso reveals that the sisters' true boyfriends have returned. Ferrando and Guglielmo quickly shed their disguises and re-enter dressed as soldiers. Confessions are made and forgiveness is begged.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Così fan tutte translates to "So do they all," a direct quote from Don Alfonso near the end of the opera. However, in Italian, the feminine plural *tutte* refers specifically to "women," so the title is often interpreted as "Women are like that." Composer W.A. Mozart and librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte also gave the opera an alternative title: *La scuola degli amanti*, or "The School for Lovers." This subtitle is more egalitarian, suggesting that both sexes have something to learn. But what is the lesson, and does the end justify the means? I'm grateful for the opportunity to stage Michael Albano's empowering adaptations to the libretto, which offer fresh perspectives on timeless teachings.

In this production, I aimed to explore the different types of love between the characters, extending beyond romantic love. We see sisterly love between Dorabella and Fiordiligi—one of the strongest bonds in the opera. With seemingly no parents around, Fiordiligi, the older sister, assumes the role of protector and caretaker, while Dorabella adds a sense of fun and daring, reminding Fiordiligi that they are still young. Fiordiligi consistently puts Dorabella's happiness before her own, even joining the ruse with the men despite her better judgment.

Then there is the platonic love between Guglielmo and Ferrando, who balance each other perfectly. Ferrando is more sensitive and nurturing, guiding the more impulsive Guglielmo, who, in turn, offers Ferrando defense and courage. Given the time period and the youth of the characters, we can infer that their romantic relationships have been relatively brief and perhaps superficial. Thus, it is the betrayal of each other's trust that proves more devastating for the men than the betrayal by their girlfriends.

We also explore the theme of temptation versus restraint through the metaphor of dessert as a symbol of desire. Inspired by Despina's hot chocolate rant, characters indulging in sweet treats reflect their tendencies to either give in to sensual pleasures or maintain control over their urges. In the opera, Guglielmo asks Ferrando, "When will we eat?" to which Ferrando responds in his aria, "A heart satiated with love does not need to eat." While Despina and Guglielmo enjoy desserts freely, the repressed Don Alfonso abstains entirely, and Ferrando resists temptation until the very end.

This theme of indulgence is mirrored in the Rococo-inspired costume design, incorporating elements of Italian baking, fruits, and delicate buttercream piping. The men in the opera view the sisters as little treats to be consumed at their whim. The set is designed to resemble both a box for baked goods and a doll house, with Fiordiligi and Dorabella metaphorically trapped inside, like decorated cupcakes on display.

Anna Theodosakis

REIMAGINING MOZART'S *COSÌ FAN TUTTE*
by Michael Patrick Albano

Così fan tutte is my favourite of the three towering Mozart/Da Ponte collaborations. Its magnificent score is beyond reproach, but I have often bristled at the dramaturgical short comings which have caused so many opera lovers to dismiss it.

The fragility of the piece is the element of disguise which is never completely convincing. Deception by disguise is a *commedia* hold-over which was already becoming shopworn by the time of the opera's premiere in 1790, but the actual weakness of the opera is a repercussion of this. In order to make the disguise element work, the two sisters, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, must be extremely gullible and in a comic piece, this is almost impossible to accomplish with any subtlety, so the sisters often just come across as unintelligent. This produces misogynistic overtones leading to a lack of resonance with contemporary audiences and for that reason *Così fan tutte* often leaves a bad taste in the mouth. Some directors insist that the sisters could be aware of the duplicity, but such a bold concept must be revealed on stage and not in a program note.

After much contemplation, I could find only one solution; insert a new scene in which we learn that the sisters are cognizant of the deception. Before torches and pitchforks are raised, let me assure you that no original music was composed for this production. Using music from the rarely performed Despina/Alfonso recitativo secco of the first act, I invented new text of which one of the most telling lines alters the dramatic thrust of the piece:

Dorabella
Nemmeno un idiota crederebbe a quei travestimenti.
(Not even an idiot would believe those disguises.)

There are other adjustments throughout the piece which I choose not to reveal but suffice to say that a reassignment of lines in the finale brings things full circle. In Da Ponte's original libretto, the women beg forgiveness for… for what? For contemplating infidelity, a trespass for which the men are exonerated? These young officers are the instigators of this runaway deceit so in a tidy reallocation of musical lines, it is they who must ask for absolution. From that moment on, no further adjustment is needed. Mozart's musical eloquence reveals emotion laid bare as both pairs of lovers are found guilty of no more than human frailty, and thus they compassionately illuminate the literal translation of *Così fan tutte* - They are all like this.

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concert master
Siri Ducharme-Leblanc
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Samantha Cardwell
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Diction	Jason Nedecky
Movement	Anna Theodosakis
Opera Administrator	Christina Bell
Production Assistant	Joy Castro

"African Queens" by Karen Slack, soprano

John R. Stratton Visitor in Music

March 20, 2025
7:30 - 9:30pm

Walter Hall,
Edward Johnson Building
80 Queens Park

Free Admission

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Theatre Technical Coordinator	Colin Harris
Head Carpenter	Peter Velocci
Scenic Painter	Alysson Bernabe
Head of Wardrobe	Andrew Nasturzio
Wig Stylist and Setter	Richard Miller
Hair and Makeup Artist	Ana Isabella Castro
Wardrobe Assistants	Angela Cabrera, Chris Faris
Paint Assistants	Joy Castro, Adam Jules
Wardrobe Stitcher	Kathleen Preston
Dresser	Mairead Canning
Properties Master	David Hoekstra
Prop Supply	Wulf Higgins (COC Props), George Moore

Riki Turofsky Master Class in Voice

Ambur Braid, soprano

April 1, 2025
12:10 - 3:00pm

Walter Hall,
Edward Johnson Building
80 Queens Park

Free Admission

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Lamour und Liebe
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Tickets: Weston Family Box Office, 273 Bloor St., W., Toronto
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